

Ecosystem Roundtable

Informational Staff Report

Date: January 19, 1999

Prepared by: Wendy Halverson Martin/Jo Turner
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Restoration Coordination Team

Topic: Update on Proposal 98-A1004 - Opening Up Butte Creek Canyon to Salmon and Steelhead Passage

Background: In 1998 a proposal was submitted to CALFED for consideration of funding. The proposal was to evaluate the feasibility of opening barriers on the upper part of Butte Creek to salmon and steelhead passage. Some of these barriers are man-made and others are waterfalls or rockslides. Two main concerns were expressed regarding this proposal. The first related to the ecological impacts of reintroducing salmon and steelhead into an area which at least one report does not identify as their historical habitat. The second issue related to the potential concern of landowners in the area because a listed species is involved.

The Technical Review Panel recommended funding for this project at \$110,000. The Integration Panel reviewed this proposal and had several questions. They ultimately reached a consensus that the project should be approved at the TRP recommended level but this approval was conditional on the sponsor meeting with DFG, Butte Creek Conservancy, and USFWS to address their concerns as one of the first tasks of the proposal. Further funding beyond this task would be conditioned on these concerns being addressed.

Status: A public meeting was held on November 3, 1999 to discuss this proposal. As a result of public input and concerns expressed regarding the proposal, a second meeting has been planned to discuss potential modifications to the proposal. Paul Ward with the Department of Fish and Game, the Institute for Fishery Resources and the Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy are coordinating on this effort.

For additional information on this topic please contact Jo Turner at (916) 653-6059 or Wendy Halverson Martin at (916) 653-5950.

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November 30, 1998

Cindy Darling
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Dear Ecosystem Roundtable members,

As members of the founding and current board of directors of the Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy, we would like to take the opportunity to present our view of the discussions over the Institute for Fishery Resources (IFR) proposal now before you. Representing the fisheries conservation voice on the current board of the Conservancy, we feel it is imperative to consider the sentiments of all stakeholders in these project reviews. We are all landowners in this watershed, and believe we need to look at all potential opportunities to analyze and improve current and historic habitats of spring and fall run chinook salmon and steelhead trout. We maintain that there is no evidence indicating these fish did not utilize the areas above Centerville Head Dam prior to the Gold Rush. As the first settlers who may have encountered these fish began blasting, hydraulic mining and diverting the entire creek in these areas, their activities most certainly could have extirpated any and all anadromous fish. There is, however, documented scientific evidence that spring run have utilized the habitat up to the Centerville Head Dam as recently as 1995. With steelheads' greater leaping ability, they most likely have utilized this habitat as well, and possibly areas above the dam. There have been no steelhead surveys to document any of their habits.

We believe, therefore, that the IFR proposal is the first step in giving us a better understanding of the physical barriers that may be precluding Butte Creek salmon and steelhead from quality habitat. Since 90% of their habitat has been blocked by the Central Valley Project and State Water Project dams, and numerous hydroelectric dams, we would be seriously neglect in not analyzing all opportunities to return these magnificent and endangered fish to all available habitat. In addition, where feasible, introduction to new habitats should be pursued. Impacts to landowners as a result of these introductions can be mitigated.


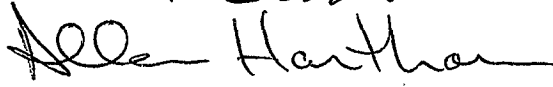

We support the conservancy board opinion that the habitat below Centerville Head Dam should be carefully assessed, both above and below the Chimney Rock Falls. Opportunities to enhance all the habitats of salmon and steelhead on Butte Creek and its tributaries should be considered. Increased flows in Butte Creek and Little Butte Creek from reduced hydroelectric operations may have greater benefits for anadromous fish than laddering or removing barriers. Without a professional assessment using the best science available, we are simply speculating about what is best for Butte Creek and its fishery.

We respectfully request that IFR be granted the full award, and a work scope be developed with stakeholder input that would prioritize the efforts to gain the maximum benefit of protecting, restoring and enhancing all habitats for anadromous fish in the Butte Creek Watershed.

As fisherman who have had our fishing rights taken away for five years, we believe the maximum effort should be expended to restore and enhance the ecological, social and economic benefits of a viable fishery on Butte Creek. We have an opportunity to recreate a trophy fishery on one of the last remaining streams that support these fish. We would be remiss if we do not make use of opportunity.

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Russ Collar
Allen Harthorn
Michael Smith

cc: Butte Creek Watershed Conservancy BOD
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
Jim Edmunson, Cal Trout
Zeke Grader, Institute for Fishery Resources
Bill Kier, Kier and Associates
Paul Ward, California Department of Fish and Game
John Icanberry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Buford Holt, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Eric Hammerling, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation